

EVE (D.)

THE PROPHECY OF SCIENCE.

*An address to the Graduating Class*

OF THE

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVER-

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by

DUNCAN EVE M. D.,

*Professor of Surgery and Clinical Surgery,*

*and Dean of the Faculty.*

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*Gentlemen of the Graduating Class:*—The true language of Science is ever the speech of prophesy, and its phropecies are infallible.

The fault is ours that we are not able to give the interpretation thereof. After the prédiction has become history, we are amazed that we did not comprehend it, prior to its fulfillment. One discovery so inseparably follows another; one conquest so inevitably leads to another; one attained elevation so invariably points to another, that each achievement in science is but the precursor of others of greater moment. But the field of its operations is so illimitable, the duration of its existence is so endless, that he indeed is its true disciple, who can catch the adumbrations of coming events. The universe is the theatre for the display of its glories and the exercise of its faculties. Time only lingers upon its confines. It cannot grow old. It is as young this night as when "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Its past is a glance at creation. Its life the measure of eternity. It smiles upon what is complete, engages what is present, and carefully forecasts the future. How plainly and clearly we do perceive its prophecies when once verified. Then all men can understand them. Occasionally, however some thoughtful student will see what it foreshadows. As glorious as is the past, as beneficent in result, yet more glorious and beneficent still is it in its potential anticipations of the future. The very contemplation of this phase of science is calculated to suggest to the patient enquirer, not only what can be accomplished, but also to afford the means which will lead to, and hasten the accomplishment.

It were easy to imagine that science stood by the side of the deep-thoughted Franklin, and addressing the God of the storm

exclaimed: I will pluck from your red hand the thunder's bolt that can rend the gnarled oak, and make it as harmless as a child's toy. And you envious flash of lightning, that fain would compass the speed of my thoughts, I will snatch you from the folds of the dark cloud and taming your fiery spirit, harness you to my will, and compel you to play in healthful glow upon the wearied and exhausted nerves. I will fashion you a race-course between earth and sky; and in the bosom of the ocean, where the billows of the cyclone roll above you, and the Leviathans of the deep play about you, and ladened with my thoughts, you shall traverse the world with a velocity that shall make the swift carrier pigeon "droop the conquered wing." You shall outstrip the flight of time, and distance the rotations of the globe. And anon from your burning, bursting, bosom, I will kindle a flame, that driving back the darkness of the night, shall swallow up the light of the stars, cause the moon to pale her ineffectual rays, and illumine populous cities with a splendor that shall rival the light of the sun.

Approaching the patient Watt, it interrupts his meditations with the exclamation: I will take vapor, the veriest breath of the babbling stream, and supply a motive power that shall laugh to scorn the combined strength of a thousand Sampsons and Titans. For I will gather in my arms the fleets, the navies and the commerce of all nations, and resisting wind and tide, and with smoke and cloud, shall waft them to their destination. I will seize the ponderous locomotive and its iron-wheeled train, and with a noise greater than thunder or the roar of the storm, I shall hurl them across a continent. I will supply the labor of millions of hands and propel the machinery of the world.

Again it says, I will lock up human speech and reproduce it at pleasure. I will grasp the faintest whisper that ever lingered upon the wings of a zephyr, and bearing it through the rage of the tempest, the roar of the storm and the din of battle, deliver it unsilenced, and unbroken, to receptive auditory nerves.

To the inspired toiling artist it says: I will catch the sun beams in their flight, and limn the features of your friend, with a fidelity, that the genius of you art can never equal.

Looking up to the heavens it exclaims! You immense orbs that roll through immeasurable space, I will not only weigh your

huge bodies, ascertain your motions and distances, but I will analyze you, and determine your chemical constituents.

Standing upon the continent of Europe, it declares, I will leap athwart the Atlantic, and dwelling in a new world, shall gather me a peculiar people, whose only search shall be after truth; whose mission shall be the felicity of the human race; whose civil polity shall secure justice to all; whose government shall be at once so broad and national, and so local and minute, as to embrace the peoples of the earth in one happy nation.

Of all the protean forms in which pestilence appeared, none was more appalling than when the destroyer came mingling with the winds of winter, lingering in the apparel of the afflicted, dwelling in his breath and in the atmosphere which surrounded him, communicated by his touch, attaching to the very walls of his habitation, and its contagion increasing with the numbers attacked, reaching out for populous cities and delighting in crowded thorough-fares, racking its victim with pain, consuming him with fever, and hurrying him with a wild agonizing delirium to an untimely grave; or if permitted to survive, forever stamping upon his features its hideous impress of scarred disfiguration. Yet when the monster appeared with Gorgon-head and a whip of scorpions, and held a "horrid banquet at which the genii of death joyously drained their glasses," Science declared I will extract your sting and neutralize your poison. I will shiver your lance with a cambric needle and upon its attenuated point place an antidote that shall by prophylactic anticipation render harmless and inert your most malignant venom.

Referring to Anæsthesia, Science exclaims: I shall surpass the wildest dreams of Greek and Roman fable. I shall discover and utilize an agent so subtle and ethereal that floating in the air it shall mingle with human respiration, and holding sensation in suspension, render the nervous system impervious to pain, stripping the operating table and chair of their horrors; and the knife and other surgical instruments and appliances of the power of torture and agony. Yea, amid what once had been terrors, the patient shall find delightful repose, and smile from the visitations of pleasing dreams, while the piercing cry of anguish is changed to the gentle murmur of painless rest.

We need not multiply examples; the voice of science is always

so full of import, that its every utterance is at once history and prophecy. It never announces an accomplished fact that the very annunciation does not presage a more important discovery. He is the best interpreter who acquires fullest knowledge of what is known, and he indeed, aided by this very power of interpretation contributes most to the attainment of unachieved results, and is enabled rightly to exercise his faculties in estimating the possibilities of scientific conquest.

The Almighty Author of all science has placed man as an epitome of creation on this globe, only revealing to him such relations and truths as the human intellect could never discover, leaving his faculties to accomplish all other knowledge, thus giving to him the felicity of ceaseless employment, and the luxury of continuous work; and the benevolence of the Creator is displayed in presenting a field of such amplitude, as to engage in the labor of discovery and invention, the entire capacity of each individual, of every succeeding generation, to the end of time.

The part of science which your profession occupies, is large enough and broad enough for all the intellectual effort of the Medical and Dental World. Yours is indeed a profession resplendent with a thousand glories, rich in its noble history, rich in the great lives that have illustrated and adorned it, rich in deeds of benevolence, rich in the contributions of every branch of science, rich in the splendid achievements of the past, rich in the duties and occupations of the present, but inconceivably rich in the promises and potentialities of the future; and with a part of this future, your lives, your time, and your toil are to be blended. Your hopes are now busy with this future. The past to you is but a memory, the present only a starting point. How gladly you would gaze with prophetic ken upon this unexplored land, and bring its arcana into the living present.

I have mentioned the fact that your profession was rich in history. It antedates all history. It existed before the inspired oracles were written, before the foundation of ancient and grand empires, before secular history was dreamed of, and in the Pentateuch it was found not unworthy of a place. The science of diseases and the art of healing, is founded in necessity, is dependent on the study of man's physical and moral nature in health and disease. It enthrones man within its circle and explores every

kingdom, mineral, vegetable, and animal, alone for his advantage and benefit. It purposes solely to bless, it seeks only to do good. It inflicts no wounds, it produces no sorrow. Its ambition is not to slay, but to make alive. Its march is followed by no tears, its presence causes neither sighs nor groans; its kindly offices are received with confidence, and remembered with gratitude. Blessings, and not execrations are its reward. It rests upon observation and reflection. It is essentially progressive. It moves with slowness, but with sureness. It has ever struggled with theories, but has acquired more from the discoveries of close observers, than from all theory. It has been influenced by every form of philosophy, religion and superstition. It has combatted error and prejudice in all their phases. In Egypt it was the secret of the priesthood. In Greece it was carefully concealed and transmitted from father to son, by the family of the Asclepiades. But even thus early we find the genius of Hippocrates seeking to separate the results of practical experience from vain speculation. Soon afterwards we find his followers blending this doctrine with the Platonic philosophy, and forming what is termed the *ancient dogmatic system*. It was cultivated when Alexandria was the seat of learning, and then degenerated into mere dialectics, and was followed by the empirical, the methodic, the pneumatic and finally eclectic schools. The great Galen appeared relieving it from confusion. The school of Salerno diffused the light of medicine in the West. Afterwards we find the science fostered by ignorant monks and suffering from every superstition, and it was not till the fourteenth century that practical medicine began to be understood. Then sprang up successively the chemico-theosophical, the chemico-material and dynamic systems.

Thus at a glance you perceive the varied forms medicine has assumed, the vicissitudes through which it has passed; and yet in its every age, stage and condition, it enlisted the ablest minds and most zealous devotees, and their aim was to improve and elevate it, to increase and extend its sphere of usefulness, and each period of development has with, whatever, of error or misconception there may have been, tended to produce that degree of excellence which the profession has at last attained. So that now a thorough knowledge of medicine as it exists would include the whole range of natural sciences, etc. What a glorious panorama of science is

spread out before you, embracing everything that can awaken intellectual curiosity, that can arouse a noble ambition, that can charm a cultivated mind, that can refine and elevate human nature, that can engage the love and excite the enthusiasm of the human heart, that can enlist the highest energy and employ the most tireless industry of our being. What now are the prophecies of all science? That the past is but the dawn, that light is increasing, and will continue to increase, until each particular branch shall shine with the splendor of a noonday sun, till the scientific heavens shall blaze with the combined effulgence of a thousand suns. Will you gentlemen pursue the investigation of your department of science with careless indifference, or will you from this night forward, resolve so to acquaint yourselves with the truths that have been attained, as to enable you to anticipate the revelations and discoveries that are to be made, and prophecy coming events by the shadows they cast before? You have torn yourselves from home, relations and friends, and come to a distant city to sojourn among strangers, you have renounced the fascinating pleasures and amusements so delightful to your age, and for months, and years, you have given your time, your labor and your lives, to the acquisition of only such knowledge of Medical and Dental Science as would make you an accredited member of your chosen profession. From this we believe, we know, that your exertions and efforts to be honorable members and living lights of that profession, shall be commensurate throughout your lives with the brief but brilliant past which you have spent with us, and the honors and distinctions which we have conferred upon you, shall be reflected with lustre and glory hereafter, upon the University from which you take your degree.

You graduate in an age of enlightenment, from the University of Tennessee. Your *Alma Mater* is the young and beautiful wife of the historic and illustrious University of our commonwealth. This night from her fair forehead, she throws back the golden tresses that fall upon her graceful shoulders, her eyes beam with intellectual animation, and love and tenderness; the rose has kissed the lilly upon her cheek and sprinkled her lips with dew. She places the wreath of victory upon your brows, folds you to her heart and with hope and confidence points you to the future.